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General and complete disarmament: transparency in armaments

Continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 66/39, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, relevant deliberations within the United Nations, the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to taking a decision at its sixty-eighth session.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the above-mentioned report prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development.

* A/68/50.

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Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Summary

In its report, the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms discusses ways to increase participation by Member States in the Register and to enhance its relevance. The Group also examines proposals to expand the scope of existing categories of the Register, to add a new category on small arms and light weapons and to include procurement through national production as an integral part of the Register.

The Group concludes that the Register continues to play a significant role in promoting transparency in armaments and is an important confidence-building measure. The Group expresses concern at the decline in reporting in recent years, noting that efforts by the Secretariat and Member States to encourage Member States to report to the Register should be enhanced. It is noted that the Group's reduced size and the limited time allocated for deliberations negatively affected its work.

The Group notes that armed unmanned aerial vehicles are covered by categories IV and V of the Register and recommends that Member States report international transfers of such vehicles to the Register. The Group also recommends that Member States continue to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, including on whether the absence of small arms and light weapons as a main category in the Register has limited its relevance and directly affected decisions on participation. Furthermore, the Group recommends improved support for the Register to increase participation by Member States and enhance its relevance.

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Foreword by the Secretary-General

Transparency in armaments helps to build trust among States and enhance international stability and security. For more than two decades, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has served as the primary global instrument for Member States to report on their transfers of conventional arms.

The review of the operation of the Register every three years has enabled it to adapt to emerging security challenges and technological developments in conventional weapons and to maintain its relevance. The 2013 review by a group of governmental experts from 15 countries addresses the challenges and threats that have affected States in recent years, including the destabilizing accumulation of illicit small arms and light weapons and increased military utility of, and international trade in, armed unmanned aerial vehicles.

The Group concluded that the issue of including small arms and light weapons as a new Register category merited continued review. It also provided clarity on reporting on armed unmanned aerial vehicles, recommending that Member States should report international transfers of those weapons.

To further enhance the Register's relevance and achieve its universality, the Group also made a number of recommendations for strengthening the Secretariat and facilitating the reporting capacity of Member States. I commend the Group's recommendations to the General Assembly.

I thank the Chair of the Group and the experts for their efforts to reconcile differing points of view and enable the adoption of the report by consensus. Their work provides a firm basis for the Register to continue to serve as a valuable resource for transparency in the field of conventional arms.

Letter of transmittal

15 July 2013

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. The Group, which you appointed pursuant to paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 66/39, comprised the following experts:

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Mr. Guy **Pollard** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Deputy Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament
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The report was prepared between April and June 2013, during which time the Group held three sessions: the first in Geneva from 8 to 12 April and the second and third in New York from 6 to 10 May and from 24 to 28 June, respectively.

Following substantial discussions, the Group concluded that the Register continued to be an important global confidence-building measure and that efforts were to be continued towards the goal of universal participation in the Register.

The Group expressed serious concerns regarding the decline in participation by Member States in the Register in recent years and recommended that support to the Secretariat should be enhanced to increase its role in the maintenance and promotion of the Register. The Group considered a number of proposals aimed at the expansion of the existing categories, the introduction of a new category for small arms and light weapons and the inclusion of procurement through national production as an integral part of the Register. The Group was unable to reach agreement on those proposals, however. Instead, it recommended that Member States should report armed unmanned aerial vehicles in a manner consistent with paragraphs 45 and 46 of the report and continue to provide the Secretary-General with their views on whether the absence of small arms and light weapons as a main category in the Register had limited its relevance and directly affected decisions on participation. The Group also recommended that the 2016 Group should further consider, among other matters, the issue of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The Group also noted that the smaller size of the Group in 2013 compared with previous groups had negatively affected its work, recommending that future groups should consist of at least 20 experts representing countries with diverse perspectives on transparency in armaments on the basis of equitable geographical representation.

The members of the Group wish to express their appreciation for the assistance that they received from members of the Secretariat, in particular Hideki Matsuno, who served as Secretary of the Group. They also appreciated the contributions of Paul Holtom and Gugu Dube, who served as consultants to the Group. Furthermore,

the Group is grateful to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, for the support received from her.

I have been requested by the Group, as its Chair, to submit to you, on its behalf, the present report, which was approved by consensus.

(*Signed*) David Robin **Wensley**
Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts
on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

I. Introduction

A. Establishment of the Register

1. In its resolution 46/36 L, on transparency in armaments, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish and maintain a universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms. Member States were called upon to provide annually for the Register data on exports and imports of conventional arms in the seven categories covered by the Register and were invited, pending the expansion of the Register, to include information on military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General convened a panel of governmental technical experts in 1992 to bring the Register into operation. Endorsing the recommendations of the Panel (see A/47/342 and Corr.1), the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/52 L, called upon all Member States to provide the requested data and information to the Secretary-General annually, beginning in 1993.

B. Review of the Register

3. In its resolution 46/36 L, the General Assembly decided to look at the Register's future expansion and to keep the scope of and the participation in the Register under review. Those issues were also reflected in the 1992 report of the panel of technical experts. Consequently, the Register has to date been reviewed at three-year intervals, with the exception of the present review, given that the current Group of Governmental Experts was convened in 2013, four years after the previous review.

1994-2006 groups of governmental experts

4. By its resolution 49/75 C, the General Assembly took note of the report of the 1994 Group of Governmental Experts (see A/49/316) and decided to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review, requesting Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views in that regard, as well as on transparency measures relating to weapons of mass destruction.

5. The 1997 Group of Governmental Experts continued to elaborate on technical procedures to ensure the effective operation of the Register. It proposed extending the reporting deadline from 30 April to 31 May and encouraged the submission of information on national points of contact and the use of the "Remarks" column in the reporting format (see A/52/316 and Corr.2). It also recommended the inclusion of information, provided on a voluntary basis, on procurement through national production and on military holdings in the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

6. The 2000 Group of Governmental Experts recommended, with a view to encouraging greater participation in the Register, the holding of regional and subregional workshops and seminars with the assistance of interested Member States; the introduction of a simplified form for providing "nil" returns; and the updating of the United Nations information booklet on the Register (see A/55/281).

7. The 2003 Group of Governmental Experts concluded that considerable progress had been made towards achieving a relatively high level of participation in the Register (see A/58/274). It recommended lowering the reporting threshold of large-calibre artillery systems from 100 mm to 75 mm in category III and the inclusion, on an exceptional basis, of man-portable air-defence systems as a subcategory in category VII, "Missiles and missile launchers". In addition, it noted that Member States in a position to do so could provide additional background information on international transfers of small arms and light weapons made or modified to military specifications and intended for military use. The recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/54.

8. The 2006 Group of Governmental Experts recommended that the reporting threshold of "warships" under category VI should be reduced from 750 to 500 metric tons. With regard to international transfers of small arms and light weapons, the Group recommended that Member States in a position to do so should provide additional background information and utilize the optional standardized reporting form. The recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/77.

2009 Group of Governmental Experts

9. The 2009 Group of Governmental Experts noted that the Register had made significant progress since its establishment in 1992, but that efforts should continue to ensure its relevance for all regions and enhance the universal participation by Member States, including workshops and increased cooperation between the Secretariat and relevant regional and subregional organizations, in addition to outreach activities by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament.

10. The Group also recommended measures to assist Member States to build capacity to submit meaningful reports, including on small arms and light weapons, and adjusted the standardized reporting forms. Furthermore, it recommended that the Secretary-General should seek the views of Member States on whether the continued absence of small arms and light weapons as a main category in the Register had limited the relevance of the Register and directly affected decisions on participation. The recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/54.

2013 Group of Governmental Experts

11. The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/39, requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2012, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on the issue.

12. Pursuant to decision 67/517 of the General Assembly, the Group of Governmental Experts was established in 2013, without changes to the other modalities for the Group as elaborated in resolution 66/39.

II. Review of the continuing operation of the Register

A. General

13. The Group reviewed the data and information submitted by Member States to the Register for 1993-2012, including tables and graphs with statistical data compiled by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Group benefited from non-papers provided by governmental experts and presentations by the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Institute for Security Studies, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

B. Relevance and universality of the Register

14. The Group stressed the importance of maintaining the relevance of the Register, noting that it was connected with the goal of universality. The Group recognized the important role of the Register with regard to promoting transparency in military matters. Experts maintained that the Register was an important confidence-building measure and remained relevant in assisting Member States in identifying excessive and destabilizing accumulations of arms, including conventional arms, given the objective of enhancing international peace, security and stability.

15. In discussing relevance and universality, the Group considered a range of factors: whether the Register addressed the security concerns of all Member States and regions, and the effect of misperceptions on regional participation; the fact that the Register did not include some categories of conventional arms, in particular small arms and light weapons; and the absence of data in the Register on non-State actors and the impact of the illicit trade on the security interests of Member States in various regions. The Group discussed ways of addressing those issues, including the potential contribution that the Register could make in identifying the point of diversion into the illicit trade. In addition, the Group considered the need for the Register to address technological developments to ensure that it reflected the security concerns of Member States and remained relevant.

C. Extent of participation

16. Since the inception of the Register, 170 Member States have reported at least once, with an average of 98 Governments having submitted reports each year on their international conventional arms transfers. The level of participation in the Register has seen a notable decline since 2007, however, with the lowest level of reporting recorded in 2012, when only 52 Member States provided a report. According to the Secretariat, 27 of 72 Member States reported in 2010 by the 31 May deadline, 33 of 86 in 2011 and 18 of 52 in 2012. The Group considered several potential factors that might be in part responsible for the decline in reporting, including a reduction in follow-up efforts regarding reporting; an increasing burden on Member States with regard to reporting on conventional arms issues; reporting fatigue felt by Member States that previously reported regularly; the limited relevance of the Register while small arms and light weapons were not

included as a main category; and the focus on the Arms Trade Treaty process at the United Nations in recent years.

17. In that context, the Group noted that a key factor had been the substantial decline in the number of Member States submitting a "nil" return. The proportion of "nil" returns fell from 60 of 113 submissions in 2007 to 13 of 52 submissions in 2012 (see table 1).

18. The Group regarded "nil" returns as equally important as information on imports and exports for achieving the goal of universal participation in the Register and also for building confidence and trust between Member States. The Group felt that the Secretariat had an important role in ensuring that Member States were aware of the possibility of submitting "nil" returns.

Table 1
Provision of "nil" returns to the Register, 2007-2012

	2007	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*
Number of submissions	113	91	80	72	86	52
Number of "nil" returns	60	39	29	30	35	13
Percentage of "nil" returns	53	43	37	41	41	25

19. The Group considered 2012 in particular because participation declined to the lowest-ever level, with many Member States that had previously regularly reported failing to do so. The United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects that were held in 2012 have been cited as reasons for not reporting.

D. Reports on exports and imports

20. The level of reporting of exports was relatively consistent between 2009 and 2011, with 30 Member States reporting in 2009, 32 in 2010 and 33 in 2011, but falling to 26 in 2012. For 2009, 45 Member States reported imports, falling to 37 in 2010, increasing to 40 in 2011 and falling to 26 in 2012.

E. Reports on additional background information

21. The level of reporting of additional background information mirrored the overall trend in reporting. Whereas the overall level of reporting between 2007 and 2012 has declined, there has been relative consistency, and sometimes even an increase, in the number of Member States reporting additional background information (see table 2).

Table 2
Provision of additional background information, 2009-2012

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of submissions	80	72	86	52
Submissions that include additional background information on military holdings	24	24	25	20
Submissions that include additional background information on procurement through national production	21	22	21	10
Submissions that include additional background information on international transfers of small arms and light weapons	47	43	49	32

22. Since 1992, 54 Member States have provided additional background information on military holdings at least once and 48 on procurement through national production at least once.

23. Experts noted that Member States were called upon to provide the Register with information on only one method for acquiring conventional weapons (import) and were only invited to provide information on procurement through national production. They considered whether that situation was inherently discriminatory. Experts recognized the security sensitivities that the information had for some Member States and also discussed the implications for the Register if the reporting burden were further increased. The Group discussed the issue of the provision of additional background information on military holdings and on procurement through national production for assisting in the identification of excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons and for confidence-building purposes. It was noted that the Register did not address the issues of transfers to and holdings of non-State actors and the security concerns that some of those raised.

24. Since 2003, 80 Member States have provided additional background information on international transfers of small arms and light weapons at least once.

25. On the recommendation of the 2009 Group (see A/64/296, para. 75), the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/54, requested Member States to submit their views to the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and whether the absence of small arms and light weapons as a main category in the Register had limited its relevance and directly affected decisions on participation. Only 10 Member States provided their views in response to that request, 9 of which expressed support for the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as an additional category in the Register.

F. Assessment of reporting at the regional level

26. All members of the groups of Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean and Western European and other States have participated in the Register at least once since its inception. Members of the groups of Eastern European and Western European and other States have been the most consistent participants. Since 2009, however, participation in both regions has declined. Participation by members

of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has fluctuated considerably since 2008, but is far from the peak reporting year of 2002 (26 reports).

27. The level of reporting by members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States saw a downward trend for the years 2005-2010. There was a spike in reporting in 2011 before the level of reporting dropped to an all-time low in 2012 (10 reports). Eight members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States have never reported.

28. The Group of African States has the lowest number of members reporting to the Register. The level of reporting fell from 15 members in 2007 to 8 in 2008, 4 in 2009 and 2010 and 2 in 2011 and 2012. Fifteen members of the Group of African States have never reported. The trend is set out in table 3.

Table 3
Trend in reporting to the Register by regional group, 2009-2012

	2009	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*
Group of African States (54 Member States)	4	4	2	2
Group of Asia-Pacific States (53 Member States)	18	16	19	10
Group of Eastern European States (23 Member States)	19	19	21	16
Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (33 Member States)	13	8	16	6
Group of Western European and other States (30 Member States)	26	25	28	18
Total (193 Member States)	**80**	**72**	**86**	**52**

Note: South Sudan became a Member State, in the Group of African States, on 14 July 2011. It is included in the total number of Member States and the Group of African States in the left-hand column.

G. Access to data and information reported

29. In accordance with the recommendations of the 2003 and 2006 groups of governmental experts, the Secretariat overhauled the Register database on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and launched a new map-based database entitled "The global reported arms trade" in October 2011 (www.un-register.org/HeavyWeapons/Index.aspx). The new database allows for direct access to and comparison of data on conventional arms exports and imports submitted by Member States since the Register began operation. The Group commended the Secretariat on its efforts to overhaul the Register's online database using limited resources. Experts noted, however, that the website needed further improvement to enable easy access to commonly sought information.

30. A total of 146 Member States have supplied information on national points of contact at least once. In 2012, 35 of the 52 Member States that reported to the Register provided information on national points of contact. The Secretariat noted that 49 Member States had not provided updated information on national points of contact since 2008.

H. Role of the Secretariat

31. The Group recognized that awareness of the Register among Member States was insufficient and required more attention, noting the important role of the Secretariat in that regard. The Secretariat maintains information and documents on the Register and on the subject of transparency in international conventional arms transfers on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, including the annual consolidated reports of the Secretary-General, General Assembly resolutions, the reports of the groups of governmental experts, the standardized reporting forms and information booklets such as "Guidelines for Reporting International Transfers: Questions and Answers". The Group emphasized the important role of the Secretariat in updating the website and database for the Register.

32. In that connection, the Group noted with concern the decline in the level of resources allocated for the Secretariat to maintain the Register, suggesting that that could have affected its ability to fulfil its functions.

33. The Group expressed appreciation for the significant work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in producing and disseminating materials relating to the Register. The Group strongly expressed the view that technical information on reporting to the Register was useful.

I. Reporting methods

34. Acting on the recommendations of the 2003 and 2006 groups of governmental experts (see A/58/274, para. 114 (f), and A/61/261, para. 126 (n)), the Secretariat developed an online tool to enable Member States to prepare and submit their reports electronically. The tool was launched in May 2012 and has been used by 10 Member States. It is currently available only in English, but translation into the other five official languages of the United Nations will be completed in 2013. Information provided using the tool is automatically entered into the new Register database. It allows Member States to easily file reports, including a "nil" return. The Secretariat has provided informal briefing sessions on electronic filing of reports and has begun developing an online training course.

35. The Group highlighted the practical utility of the information booklet "Guidelines for Reporting International Transfers: Questions and Answers", which provides guidance to Member States on how to prepare and submit reports, while noting that it had not been updated since 2007. The Group noted that, while most of the information contained therein remained relevant, the booklet would need to be updated to reflect developments with regard to the online reporting tool. Experts suggested that the booklet should be updated within existing resources.

III. Further development of the Register

A. Maintaining the relevance and universality of the Register

36. In the light of the decline in reporting in recent years, the Group called for the strengthening of efforts to promote the Register and achieve universal participation. Experts discussed various measures that could be taken for that purpose, including

to raise awareness of the Register's aims, strengths and utility in order to encourage Member States to report; to explore options for building capacity and providing training to enable Member States to report; to reduce the reporting burden and reporting fatigue for Member States; to review technical procedures that the Secretariat could employ to facilitate reporting; and to ensure the relevance of the Register in addressing the security concerns of Member States. The Group paid particular attention to efforts to encourage reporting by Member States that had previously regularly provided "nil" returns but had not reported to the Register in recent years.

37. The Group noted that the limited resources of the Secretariat affected its efforts to promote participation in the Register and to achieve universality. Experts exchanged views on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to administer the Register. They also noted the important role of Member States in raising awareness of the Register and in assisting in building capacity and providing training to enable Member States to participate. The Group noted that United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament and relevant regional organizations could play a useful role in that regard.

38. The Group considered expanding the Register's scope to include small arms and light weapons and advanced conventional arms that could offer force projection, were force multipliers or that could provide substantial combat support. The Group also considered the issue of background information on national holdings and on procurement through national production.

39. In discussing the expansion of the Register's scope, the Group discussed the issue of arms transfers to non-State actors and the impact of such transfers, in particular on subregions and regions. The Group recalled the conclusion of the 2006 Group that only transfers involving Member States should be reported to the Register and noted that the Register did not include data involving non-State actors, which limited the Register's ability to fully address the problems posed by uncontrolled and unregulated transfers and holdings of arms.

40. The Group noted the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in April 2013 and considered its potential impact on the operation of the Register. The Group noted that the Register and the Treaty served different functions and had different audiences, expressing its firm conviction that the Register needed to continue to play its role as a voluntary transparency and confidence-building measure.

B. Categories covered by the Register

41. The Group considered the potential updating and expansion of the existing categories in the light of the mandate of the Register. The Group acknowledged that the categories should reflect the security concerns of Member States and technological developments. In that regard, the Group also exchanged views on whether the Register should focus on conventional arms of an offensive nature and whether distinctions between the offensive and defensive nature of conventional arms remained relevant.

Category I
Battle tanks

42. The Group did not consider amending category I of the Register.

Category II
Armoured combat vehicles

43. The Group had before it a proposal for the inclusion of: (a) armoured recovery vehicles, tank transporters, amphibious and deep water fording vehicles and armoured bridge-launching vehicles; and (b) tracked, semi-tracked or wheeled self-propelled vehicles, with armoured protection and cross-country capability specially designed, or modified and equipped: (i) with organic technical means for observation, reconnaissance, target indication, and designed to perform reconnaissance missions; or (ii) with integral organic technical means for command of troops; or (iii) with integral organic electronic and technical means designed for electronic warfare.

Category III
Large-calibre artillery systems

44. The Group considered the possible lowering of the calibre threshold of the category, recognizing the intrinsic link of such consideration to the issue of the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as a new category.

Category IV
Combat aircraft

45. The Group noted the discussion of the 2006 Group that category IV already covered armed unmanned aerial vehicles and of the 2009 Group on a proposal to include a new category for such vehicles. The Group reviewed proposals for providing greater clarity to category IV and considered the following new description:

> Combat aircraft includes manned and unmanned aerial vehicles as defined below:
>
> (a) Manned fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons or other weapons of destruction, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized electronic warfare, suppression of air defence or reconnaissance missions;
>
> (b) Unmanned fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons or other weapons of destruction.
>
> The term "combat aircraft" does not include primary trainer aircraft, unless designed, equipped or modified as described above.

Category V
Attack helicopters

46. In discussing armed unmanned versions of attack helicopters and taking into account its consideration regarding category IV, the Group reviewed proposals with a view to giving greater clarity to category V and considered the following new description:

> Attack helicopters include manned and unmanned aerial vehicles as defined below:
>
> (a) Manned rotary-wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided or unguided anti-armour, air-to-surface, air-to-subsurface, or air-to-air weapons and equipped with an integrated fire control and aiming system for these weapons, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized reconnaissance or electronic warfare missions;
>
> (b) Unmanned rotary-wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided or unguided anti-armour, air-to-surface, air-to-subsurface, or air-to-air weapons and equipped with an integrated fire control and aiming system for these weapons.

47. The Group also reviewed a proposal for changing the title of category V to "Combat helicopters".

Category VI
Warships

48. The Group reviewed a proposal to amend category VI to reduce the standard displacement of vessels or submarines to 150 metric tons or more and/or remove the reference to the range for missiles and torpedoes. The Group also reviewed a proposal to remove the range for torpedoes entirely.

Category VII
Missiles and missile launchers

49. The Group reviewed proposals to amend category VII to lower or eliminate the range threshold for missiles and to include surface-to-air missiles and missile launchers.

C. Expansion of the scope of the Register

50. The Group reviewed the issue of expanding the scope of the Register to include small arms and light weapons as a new main category in the Register. The Group noted that some Member States had been providing additional background information on international transfers of small arms and light weapons in accordance with the recommendations of the 2003, 2006 and 2009 groups of governmental experts. The Group considered whether reporting on such international transfers would actually contribute to identifying excessive and destabilizing accumulations. The Group also considered whether there could be an unintended negative effect on levels of reporting, owing to an increased reporting burden and sensitivities of some Member States regarding the transfer of those conventional arms. The Group also considered whether adding a new category for

small arms and light weapons to the Register could enhance its relevance. The Group noted that some Member States were not in a position to report such data until small arms and light weapons were included as an eighth category in the Register. The Group reviewed a proposal to define "small arms" as "conventional arms with a calibre up to and including 0.50"/12.7 mm" and "light weapons" as "conventional arms with a calibre greater than 0.50"/12.7 mm and up to and including 75 mm". The Group reviewed proposals for reporting small arms and light weapons as an eighth category in the Register, including two subcategories for "small arms" and "light weapons" and six subcategories for "small arms" and seven subcategories for "light weapons" (the same subcategories as provided for in the optional reporting form).[1]

51. The Group reviewed a proposal to invite Member States to provide additional background information on military holdings and on procurement through national production on a standardized reporting form. The Group considered whether the provision of information on such a form would provide clarity and facilitate analysis.

52. In discussing the provision of information on military holdings, the Group noted that that information was regarded by some Member States as particularly sensitive and called for it to be considered separately from information on procurement through national production. The Group reviewed a proposal to include procurement through national production in the Register as an integral part of national reporting, given that Member States could also acquire arms in that way. The Group noted that the low level of reporting on procurement through national production might not provide an accurate representation of global patterns of conventional arms acquisitions. Experts considered whether that would affect the overall level of participation.

D. Review of the Register

53. The Group emphasized the importance of conducting periodic reviews of the Register to enhance its operation and consider its further development. That was necessary to achieve universal participation and ensure the Register's relevance for Member States as a confidence-building measure in the light of changing security dynamics, in particular with regard to technological developments in conventional arms.

E. Relationship between the Register and other relevant United Nations and regional instruments

54. The Group considered reporting by Member States to United Nations instruments on conventional arms and the impact on participation in the Register. The Group recognized that Member States might have overlapping reporting commitments relating to the transfer of conventional arms and encouraged them to identify synergies to reduce the reporting burden. The Group considered the possibilities for the Secretariat and relevant regional and subregional organizations to collaborate on encouraging reporting and promoting transparency in international conventional arms transfers.

[1] See A/61/261, annexes I and II.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

55. The Group concluded that the Register played a significant role in promoting transparency in armaments and was an important confidence-building measure. The Group noted the importance of seeking universal participation in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Register.

56. The Group expressed concern at the decline in reporting in recent years. Efforts by the Secretariat and Member States to encourage Member States to report to the Register should be enhanced. The Group emphasized the importance of identifying opportunities to promote and raise awareness of the Register.

57. The Group reaffirmed the conclusions of previous groups of governmental experts that the Conventional Arms Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs should continue to actively support and promote the Register as one of its primary missions. The Group reflected on the human and financial resource challenges faced by the Secretariat and concluded that they should be addressed as a priority. In that context, the Group reaffirmed the need to strengthen the Office through enhanced budgetary support to enable it to fulfil its mandated responsibilities in the area of transparency in armaments. The Group also encouraged Member States to provide voluntary contributions to the Secretariat.

58. The Group called upon Member States to play an active role in raising awareness of the Register and assisting, upon request, with capacity-building and training to enable Member States to participate in the Register. Regional organizations and the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament could also play a useful role in promoting transparency in armaments.

59. The Group reaffirmed the importance of regular and timely reporting to the Register, including "nil" returns. The Group emphasized that a "nil" return was as important as a report on a Member State's imports and exports. The Group concluded that a substantial decline in the number of Member States submitting "nil" returns had significantly contributed to the overall decline in participation in recent years.

60. The Group encouraged Member States to report by the 31 May deadline in order to facilitate early compilation and dissemination of data and information. The Secretariat should continue its practice of circulating the reporting forms and guidance on using the online reporting form to Member States, under cover of a note verbale to permanent missions in New York at the beginning of each year, and to national points of contact. The Secretariat should also send subsequent reminders to permanent missions in New York and to national points of contact to help to facilitate submissions.

61. The Group commended the Office for Disarmament Affairs for establishing the online reporting tool for the electronic filing of reports and for overhauling the Register's database, thereby implementing the recommendations of the 2003 and 2006 groups of governmental experts. The Group encouraged greater use of the online reporting tool.

62. The Group recognized that the Register did not address transfers to and holdings of arms by non-State actors. Owing to the complexity of the issue, the Group concluded that it should be reviewed in more detail by future groups of

governmental experts, bearing in mind the conclusion of the 2006 Group that the Register covered only transfers between Member States.

63. With regard to the proposals made in paragraphs 43 to 52 above, the Group noted that those issues should be further reviewed by future groups of governmental experts.

64. The Group recognized the importance of the principle of transparency and its relevance to weapons of mass destruction. In its consideration of proposals to add a new category to include such weapons, the Group reviewed the nature of the Register, regional security concerns and existing international legal instruments concerning the subject matter, in addition to General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. In view of all those factors, particularly taking into account that the Register covered only conventional arms, the Group agreed that the question of transparency in weapons of mass destruction was an issue that should be addressed by the Assembly.

65. The Group concluded that the issue of the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as a new Register category merited continued review by future groups of governmental experts.

66. The Group concluded that Member States in a position to do so should continue to provide background information, including on military holdings, procurement through national production, international transfers of small arms and light weapons and national policies on arms transfers, pending the further development of the Register.

67. Further to its consideration of a standardized reporting form for the submission of voluntary information on military holdings and on procurement through national production, the Group noted that the provision of guidance to Member States could improve the uniformity and utility of the data provided.

68. The Group reiterated the need for regular reviews of the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. The Group noted that, owing to the decline in resources, the duration of the meetings and the size of the Group had shrunk significantly compared with the previous groups, which had negatively affected its work. The Group stressed that future groups should be afforded ample time to review the Register. The Group noted that the Register review process would benefit from more experts representing countries with diverse perspectives on transparency in armaments on the basis of equitable geographical representation.

B. Recommendations

69. Pursuant to its discussions, the Group recommends that Member States report armed unmanned aerial vehicles in a manner consistent with paragraphs 45 and 46 of the present report.

70. The Group recommends that Member States continue to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, including on whether the absence of small arms and light weapons as a main category in the Register has limited its relevance and directly affected decisions on participation. The Group recommends that the 2016 Group further consider, among other matters, the issue of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

71. The Group recommends that Member States that are in a position to do so provide data and information on international transfers of small arms and light weapons to the Register as part of additional background information on the basis of the standardized reporting form on international transfers of small arms and light weapons.

72. The Group recommends that Member States that are in a position to do so provide data and information on procurement through national production and also on military holdings to the Register as background information.

73. The Group also recommends that Member States consistently submit reports by the 31 May deadline, including "nil" returns, in order to promote the universality of the Register. The Group stressed the importance of the Secretariat's efforts in encouraging Member States to report to the Register. It also recognized the role that relevant regional organizations and the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament could play in that regard.

74. In this context, the Group strongly recommends enhanced budgetary support and human resources for the Register so that the Conventional Arms Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs can increase its role in maintaining and promoting participation in the Register. The Group also encourages Member States in a position to do so to provide voluntary contributions to the Secretariat. The Group encourages Member States and the Secretariat to render assistance, upon request, to Member States in order to build capacity to submit reports to the Register.

75. Based on the recommendations made by the 2003, 2006 and 2009 groups of governmental experts (see A/58/274, A/61/261 and A/64/296), the Group made recommendations to promote reporting to the Register. They are set out in the annex to the present report.

76. The Group recommends that the next regular review of the Register be held by a group of governmental experts in 2016. The Office for Disarmament Affairs should resume its past practice of including at least 20 experts representing countries with diverse perspectives on transparency in armaments on the basis of equitable geographical representation.

Annex

Illustrative list of measures to promote reporting to the Register

1. With a view to raising awareness of the aims, strengths and utility of the Register in order to encourage Member States to report to the Register:

(a) The United Nations could make an annual high-level statement on the continuing importance of the Register;

(b) Member States could consider establishing an annual day for promoting the issue of transparency in armaments;

(c) Member States, with the support of the Secretariat, could arrange a session in the General Assembly dedicated to promoting transparency in armaments in general and reporting to the Register in particular;

(d) Member States, with the support of the Secretariat, could arrange for an event to promote reporting to the Register in connection with other activities in the United Nations relating to conventional arms, where appropriate;

(e) Member States should consider providing financial support to convene a series of workshops devoted to the Register and the Secretariat should conduct follow-up activities with Member States that have participated in regional workshops to encourage reporting and to collect feedback;

(f) The United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament should explore options for promoting the Register and encourage reporting to the Register in their respective regions;

(g) Meetings of regional organizations should be used as platforms for promoting transparency in international arms transfers and reporting to the Register in particular, where appropriate;

(h) A special effort should be made to promote reporting by Member States in the Middle East and North Africa, and Member States and relevant regional organizations should be encouraged, with the support of the Secretariat, to hold regional workshops on the Register's aims, strengths and utility for Member States in that region;

(i) The Secretariat and Member States should explore methods for raising awareness of the Register among civil society.

2. With regard to exploring options for building capacity and providing training to enable Member States to report to the Register:

(a) Regional workshops should be used to provide training;

(b) Online tools should be developed as a cost-effective method to provide training;

(c) Member States should consider providing assistance to other Member States.

3. To reduce the reporting burden and reporting fatigue for Member States, possibilities should be explored for Member States to submit their reports to the

Register also to other relevant instruments that require Member States to report on international arms transfers, such as those at the regional and subregional levels.

4. With regard to technical procedures that the Secretariat could employ to facilitate reporting to the Register:

(a) The Secretariat should maintain more regular contact with Member States, for example by issuing more reminders;

(b) The Secretariat should follow up with Member States that have a good record of reporting on imports and exports or of providing "nil" returns, but that have not reported to the Secretariat by September of each year. This should be carried out on a targeted basis and, among other things, use should be made of other United Nations disarmament meetings for this purpose;

(c) The Secretariat should promote greater use of the online reporting tool;

(d) The Secretariat should provide Member States with a calendar stipulating deadlines for reports on conventional arms issues at the beginning of each year;

(e) The Secretariat should ensure that information provided by Member States, even if provided after the reporting deadline, is disseminated in a timely manner via the map-based database entitled "The global reported arms trade" and also in reports of the Secretary-General made available on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs;

(f) The Secretariat should regularly update the contact information and the information booklet available on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs;

(g) The Secretariat should prominently display reminders and the current level of reporting on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs;

(h) The Secretariat should use existing United Nations communication platforms, such as the United Nations Daily News bulletin, to remind Member States of the request to report to the Register or to publish reporting lists.